

NEWS RELEASE



Bureau of Land Management, and
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



Forest Service



Coeur d'Alene Tribe

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Coeur d'Alene Basin Draft Interim Restoration Plan Released for Public Review and Comment *30-day comment period opens*

The Coeur d'Alene Basin Natural Resource Trustees (Trustees), a partnership between the U.S. Department of Interior (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Bureau of Land Management), U.S. Department of Agriculture (Forest Service), and the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, announced today the release of the "Draft Coeur d'Alene Basin Interim Restoration Plan" (Draft Interim Restoration Plan) for public comment.

Trustees have reached consensus on the proposed alternatives in the Draft Interim Restoration Plan in coordination with the State of Idaho. Following the close and review of public comments on the proposed alternatives, the Trustees, in coordination and agreement with the State of Idaho, will select the interim restoration alternative and prepare and adopt the final interim restoration plan.

The purpose of the Trustees' Draft Interim Restoration Plan is to identify restoration alternatives for addressing mining-related natural resource injuries in the Coeur d'Alene River Basin (Basin), and to provide the public notice and opportunity to comment on those alternatives during a thirty-day comment period that will begin on June 19, 2006 and end on July 18, 2006.

For over 100 years, mining, milling, and refining operations in the Basin produced and released hazardous substances containing metals, including cadmium, lead, and zinc. As a result, Basin soil, sediment and water contain elevated concentrations of these metals that injure those and other natural resources in the Basin.

In 2003, the U.S. District Court for the District of Idaho ruled in Coeur d'Alene Tribe v. ASARCO, et al., that natural resources have been injured by hazardous substances

released from mining and mineral processing facilities in the Basin. The injured natural resources include surface and ground water, soils and sediments, riparian resources, fish, and birds (i.e., tundra swans that feed in the lower Basin).

The Trustees have concluded settlements with several parties potentially responsible for natural resource damages in the Basin under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act of 1980 (CERCLA). Under CERCLA, damages recovered from parties responsible for natural resource injuries are used by natural resource trustees “to restore, replace, or acquire the equivalent of the injured resources.” In the restoration planning process, natural resource trustees consider public comments on proposed alternatives presented in documents such as this Draft Interim Restoration Plan.

The Trustees’ Draft Interim Restoration Plan proposes stream stabilization and wetland restoration projects that are intended to be conducted in the Basin between 2006 and 2008 at an estimated cost of \$3 million. These projects would not fully restore mining-related natural resource injuries in the Basin, but would partially compensate the public for such losses and begin the restoration process. The Trustees’ Draft Interim Restoration Plan is not intended to quantify or analyze the full extent of restoration needed in the Basin.

The scope of restoration activity undertaken as a result of this Draft Interim Restoration Plan would depend on current and near-future funds, property, and services made available through the resolution of natural resource damage claims. The proposed alternatives in this Draft Interim Restoration Plan are consistent with the funds currently available from the Trustees’ prior settlements with several potentially responsible parties in the Basin (approximately \$3 million dollars). Additional funds may also become available through requests for reimbursable funds that are submitted by the Federal Trustees to the ASARCO, Inc. Environmental Trust, which the company established through a court approved, partial settlement of certain nationwide environmental claims against it by the United States, and/or through Trustee settlements for natural resource damages with the remaining potentially responsible parties.

After consideration of comments submitted during the public comment period for the Trustees’ Draft Interim Restoration Plan, and after completion of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, the Trustees will select the restoration alternative to pursue and will publish a final Interim Restoration Plan which identifies the actions that will be implemented.

The Draft Interim Restoration Plan can be viewed and downloaded on the web site of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at <http://www.fws.gov/pacific/ecoservices/envicon/nrda/restoration.html>, or <http://www.fws.gov/easternwashington>.

Links to the Draft Interim Restoration Plan will also be posted on the internet sites of the U.S. Forest Service at <http://www.fs.fed.us/ipnf/eco/projects.html>; the Bureau of Land

Management at <http://www.id.blm.gov/>; and the Coeur d'Alene Tribe at http://www.cdatribe-nsn.gov/lake/p_damage.shtml.

Announcement of the Draft Interim Restoration Plan begins a 30 day-comment period that will end on July 18, 2006. Written comments on the Draft Interim Restoration Plan should be submitted to: Brian Spears, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Upper Columbia Fish and Wildlife Office, 11103 East Montgomery Drive, Spokane, WA 99206, or by facsimile to 509-891-6748. Comments may also be sent by electronic mail to coeurdaleneplan@fws.gov. Please write "Interim Restoration Plan" in the e-mail subject header and your name and return address in the body of your message. If you do not receive a confirmation from the system that we have received your Internet message, contact the US Fish and Wildlife Service directly by calling the Upper Columbia Fish and Wildlife Office at 509-891-6839.

Hard copies of the Draft Interim Restoration Plan will be available for review during normal office hours at the Upper Columbia Fish and Wildlife Office (address above) and the Coeur d'Alene Tribe NRDA Office (424 Sherman Avenue, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, 83814).